

it even more difficult for them to get to some point of ingress or egress.

These are not open vehicles. When they are in the water, it is almost like an enclosed bus. It is almost like—imagine if you are on an airplane in the water or on a bus in the matter. It is not a boat; it is a vehicle. So the NTSB recommendations were pretty straightforward. Unfortunately, nothing happened as a result of those recommendations.

I am in the early stages of drafting legislation with input from the NTSB and the Coast Guard to require that the design issues with these passenger vessels be addressed and that the boats that are not compliant be taken out of service until they can be compliant. We think that their past recommendations are reasonable and common sense. We really think the biggest problem that has to be addressed is this reserve buoyancy that has been pointed out in the past as part of the significant problem. If they can't do the buoyancy on a really timely basis, at a minimum, remove the canopies if they are going on the water so there is an opportunity for people to escape what is a sinking coffin, which it was; it was a sinking coffin for way too many people last Thursday.

As always, I want this to be done in a way that makes sense, but I don't think it makes sense for us to wait another year to address some of these glaring issues in terms of passenger safety.

I also would like to take a moment to recognize the victims in this tragedy. We had five victims who were from Missouri: William Asher, 69, and Rose Marie Hamann, 68, who both lived in St. Louis; Janice Bright and her husband, William Bright, 63 and 65, from Higginsville, MO, closer to Kansas City; Bob Williams, the driver, not the captain of the vessel, 73 years old, who lived in Branson.

From Arkansas, Steve Smith was 53, and Lance Smith was 15 years old.

From Illinois, Leslie Dennison was 64 years old.

Maybe the most heartbreaking, in some ways, was the large family who lost so many members as a result of this vehicle sinking in the Table Rock Lake: Angela, 45; Belinda, 69; Ervin, 76; Glenn, 40; Horace, 70; and then the Coleman children, including Reece, who was 9; Evan, who was 7; Maxwell, who was 2; and Arya, who was only 1 year old.

We mourn their deaths. I do think this is a situation where you do feel helpless. On the other hand, I do think there are steps we can take so that these particular amphibious vehicles are addressed in terms of passenger safety so that there is never again a feeling of helplessness when one of these boats finds itself in a situation where it is taking on water but the people in the vehicle cannot get out of the vehicle in order to save themselves and can't even avail themselves of life preservers in a way that would protect

them if for any reason they were not capable swimmers.

I am very proud of both NTSB and the Coast Guard, who were working well together when I was down there. Mayor Best was doing a terrific job. The Red Cross was there in full display in terms of providing services. The people of Branson were in the midst of an outpouring of love, affection, respect, and sympathy—and the entire State. Our Governor has done a good job.

Frankly, it is the silly season for me. This is the time when there are relatively few weeks until an election, and the fur is flying, and the politics go back and forth. It was like an oasis on Friday in terms of everyone coming together, setting their politics on the side of the road, and trying to work together to find answers to these difficult questions and come together as we should and find a way to protect the traveling public and the people.

The saddest thing about this is the people who went on this vehicle went because they were there having a great time. That is probably a cruel irony of this situation. They weren't taking a bus on the way to work. They weren't taking a plane on a business trip. They were enjoying a beautiful location with their family in the middle of what should have been a carefree moment, and it turned deadly and tragic. We do need to come together and try to make sure this doesn't happen in the future.

With a respectful nod to all the first responders and the people of the Branson community who have been so supportive, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, before the two Senators from Missouri leave the floor, let me express my personal condolences to them, which I know are shared by each and every Member of this body. The tragedy in Missouri is absolutely heartbreaking for the families, for the community, and for the State, and I want our two colleagues from Missouri to know that we stand with them during this very difficult time.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 3405 AND 3422 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3399

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following amendments be called up en bloc: Heller amendment No. 3405 and Durbin amendment No. 3422. I further ask consent that at 2:15 p.m. today, there be 5 minutes of debate, equally divided in the usual form, and that following the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate vote in relation to the Heller and Durbin amendments in the order listed and that there be no second-degree amendments in order to the amendments prior to the votes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the amendments by number.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Maine [Ms. COLLINS], for others, proposes amendments numbered 3405 and 3422 en bloc to amendment No. 3399.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 3405

(Purpose: To increase the amount available for a Community Volunteer Income Tax Assistance matching grants program for tax return preparation assistance)

On page 154, line 14, strike "\$15,000,000" and insert "\$20,000,000".

AMENDMENT NO. 3422

(Purpose: To require the Inspector General to update an audit report concerning on-time performance of Amtrak)

In the matter under the heading "SALARIES AND EXPENSES" under the heading "OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL" under the heading "NATIONAL RAILROAD PASSENGER CORPORATION" in title III of C.F. division D, in the fourth proviso, strike "Government." and insert the following: "Government: *Provided further*, That not later than 240 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Inspector General shall update the report entitled 'Effects of Amtrak's Poor On-Time Performance', numbered CR-2008-047, and dated March 28, 2008, and make the updated report publicly available."

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:35 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PERDUE).

INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, FINANCIAL SERVICES, AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2019—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

AMENDMENT NO. 3405

Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, I rise today in support of my amendment, Heller-Brown amendment No. 3405. This bipartisan amendment increases funding for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program, better known as VITA, by \$5 million for the next fiscal year.

Building upon the success of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, it is important that we take additional steps to ensure that Nevada families are fully able to realize the benefits of the new tax laws and maximize their returns. The VITA Program is one way to do that.

The VITA Program offers free tax help to lower income and middle-income taxpayers—those who often need it the most—by helping them to prepare and file their income tax returns.

Every year, VITA programs help tens of thousands of Nevadans and millions of taxpayers nationwide keep more of their hard-earned money. As a statistic, in 2015, VITA sites helped nearly 23,000 Nevadans file their returns and processed refunds that exceeded \$25 million.

That is why I urge all of my colleagues to join me and Senator BROWN in supporting hard-working American taxpayers and voting yes on this bipartisan amendment, Heller-Brown amendment No. 3405.